

Message Text

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PAGE 01 RANGOO 01135 060243Z

67

ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 IO-11

ACDA-07 MC-02 /076 W

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R 060223Z APR 76

FM AMEMBASSY RANGOON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1295

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

USLO PEKING

C O N F I D E N T I A L RANGOON 1135

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT BM

SUBJ: GUB VERSUS BCP

1. SUMMARY: GUB CHARGES, IN REPORTING ON A RECENT CLASH WITH BCP, THAT BCP USED ARTILLERY AND OTHERWISE ESCALATED SCALE OF WAR IN BURMA APPEAR TO BE FALSE. PURPOSE IN MAKING THESE CHARGES UNCLEAR. THEY MAY TO SOME EXTENT REFLECT REAL FEELING IN ARMY THAT BCP ESCALATION FROM COMING TRUE BY PUBLICIZING IT BEFORE IT HAPPENS. END SUMMARY.

2. IN ACCOUNTS OF BATTLE BETWEEN BURMESE ARMY AND BCP OVER FIVE DAY PERIOD, MARCH 16-20, WHICH APPEARED IN BURMESE PRESS MARCH 27, IT WAS CHARGED THAT BURMA COMMUNIST PARTY (BCP) FORCES USED "HEAVY WEAPONS" IN THEIR ATTACKS. ONE ACCOUNT SAID THE BCP USED ARTILLERY. (COMMENT: MOST LIKELY LARGE MORTARS, WHICH BCP HAS HAD FOR SOME TIME, WERE MEANT. SEE IR 6812002576). DURING COURSE OF BATTLE, BCP ATTEMPT TO SURROUND AND ANNIHILATE ONE BURMA ARMY UNIT AT VILLAGE OF MONG LWE IN NORTHERN SHAN STATE NEAR PRC BORDER WAS REPULSED. BCP FORCES THEN RETREATED WITH LOSSES OF 100 KILLED AND 150 WOUNDED COMPARED TO 26 KILLED AND 48 WOUNDED FOR BURMA ARMY.

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PAGE 02 RANGOO 01135 060243Z

2. SUBSEQUENT EDITORIAL IN WORKING PEOPLE'S DAILY MARCH 30 CHARGED

THAT BCP FORCES RETREATED INTO TERRITORIES "WHICH TATAMADAW (BURMA ARMY) WILL FIND EMBARRASSING TO PURSUE", I.E., THE PRC. EDITORIAL WENT ON TO CHARGE THAT BCP COMMITTED UNPRECEDENTEDLY LARGE NUMBER OF SOLDIERS AND RAISED BATTLE TO NEW LEVEL AS REGARDS TYPE OF WEAPON AND QUANTITY OF AMMUNITION USED IN ANY ONE FIGHT. EDITORIAL ADDED THAT IT MUST BE PRESUME THAT LARGE QUANTITIES OF ARMS AND AMMUNITION HAVE COME ACROSS FROM OLD INDOCHINA THEATER.

3. AS FAR AS EMBASSY AWARE CHARGES OF ESCALATION IN SCALE OF WAR-FARE NOT TRUE, WITH EXCEPTION OF NUMBER OF MEN INVOLVED. BCP CONTINUES TO BE ARMED AS IT HAS IN PAST. DIFFICULT TO USE HEAVIER EQUIPMENT, SUCH AS ARTILLERY, BECAUSE OF EXTREMELY DIFFICULT TERRAIN IN COMBAT AREA.

4. IT IS NOT CLEAR WHY GUB CHOSE TO MAKE THESE CHARGES, WHICH SUBSEQUENTLY RECEIVED INTERNATIONAL PUBLICITY. TWO LINES OF SPECULATION OCCUR. FIRST, THE CHARGES MAY REFLECT REAL FEELING WITHIN BURMA ARMY THAT BCP HAS SUPERIOR EQUIPMENT. SECOND, GUB MAY HOPE FORESTALL INTRODUCTION OF WEAPONS AND AMMUNITION FROM INDOCHINA BY CHARGING ON INTERNATIONAL STAGE THAT EVENT HAS ALREADY OCCURRED. (INTRODUCTION OF ARMS AND AMMUNITION FROM INDOCHINA IS REAL BURMESE FEAR).
OSBORN

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